

Claims

- [c1] 1. A method of collecting information on a data aggregation service comprising the steps of: a) a data acquisition application sending a request to a third party computer; b) said third party computer sending a response to said data acquisition application; c) said data acquisition application sending to a data aggregation service at least some of the information contained in said response; and d) said data aggregation service storing at least some of the information contained in said at least some of the information contained in said response received from said data acquisition application.
- [c2] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said request to a third party computer initiates the process.
- [c3] 3. The method of claim 2 wherein said request to a third party computer incorporates information specific to said data acquisition application's owner or said data acquisition application's operator.
- [c4] 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said data aggregation service sends a request to said data acquisition application that said data acquisition application then utilizes to

prepare said request to a third party computer.

- [c5] 5. The method of claim 4 wherein said request to said data acquisition application incorporates information known by said data aggregation service relating to said data acquisition application or said data acquisition application's owner or said data acquisition application's operator.
- [c6] 6. The method of claim 5 wherein said request to said data acquisition application contains sufficient information that said data acquisition application can generate said request to a third party computer without utilizing additional information specific to said data acquisition application's owner or said data acquisition application's operator.
- [c7] 7. The method of claim 4 wherein said data aggregation server increases the speed or efficiency of information collection by not issuing at least one said request to said data acquisition application that said data aggregation server predicts will return redundant information with high probability.
- [c8] 8. The method of claim 7 wherein said data aggregation application makes predictions by utilizing its knowledge of information already acquired and stored in said data

aggregation server and/or information it possesses specific to one or more said data acquisition application owners or said data acquisition application operators.

[c9] 9. The method of claim 6 wherein said data aggregation server increases the speed or efficiency of information collection by not issuing at least one said request to said data acquisition application that said data aggregation server predicts will return redundant information with high probability.

[c10] 10. The method of claim 9 wherein said data aggregation application makes predictions by utilizing its knowledge of information already acquired and stored in said data aggregation server and/or information it possesses specific to one or more said data acquisition application owners or said data acquisition application operators.

[c11] 11. A system for collecting information from one or more third party computers comprising: a data aggregation service; a data acquisition application; a third party computer; a data sharing connection between said data acquisition application and said third party computer capable of transmitting a request from said data acquisition application to said third party computer and capable of transmitting a response from said third party computer to said data acquisition application; and a data

sharing connection between said data acquisition application and said data aggregation service capable of transmitting at least some of the information contained in said response from said data acquisition application to said data aggregation service.

[c12] 12. The system of claim 11 wherein said data sharing connection between said data acquisition application and said data aggregation service also is capable of transmitting a request from said data aggregation service to said data acquisition application.

[c13] 13. A method for facilitating automated acquisition of data from computer-based network data sources by means of one or more data aggregation servers and a distributed network of one or more client computers (each operated by and/or on behalf of one or more end users).